

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 PM by the Chairman, Mr. Carpender, and the following members were present:

Mr. Richard Carpender, Chair	Mrs. Marge Levesque, Clerk	Mrs. Marilyn King
Ms. Sylvia Wedge, Vice Chair	Mr. Michael Buddemeyer	Mrs. Cynthia Perrotti
	Mrs. Angela Volpicelli	

Also Present: Dr. Lusi, Colleen Jermain, Mark Dunham, and Patti Cofield

Absent: Daniel Klemmer

A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and was seconded by Mrs. Levesque to adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to R.I. Law 42-46-5, Exceptions (a)(1) Job Performance/Personnel Matters; (a)(2) Collective Bargaining and/or Litigation; or (a)(8) Student Discipline. So voted 7-0.

The Public Session recessed at 6:37 and resumed at 7:08 PM.

1. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Mr. Carpender reported on the following:

- An Executive Session was held prior to this meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and was seconded by Mrs. Levesque to adjourn to Executive Session under R.I. Law 42-46-5, Exception (a)(1) Job Performance/Personnel Matters. So voted 7-0. No motions or votes taken. A motion to adjourn the session was made by Ms. Wedge and was seconded by Mrs. Levesque. So voted 7-0. A motion to seal the minutes of the Executive Session was made by Ms. Wedge and was seconded by Mrs. Levesque. So voted 7-0.
- The House of Representatives was supposed to vote on the supplemental budget today. A section of the budget had language in it having to do with school contracts and, if passed as is, would require contracts to be approved by the Town Council. School Committees are opposed to that. Mr. Carpender sent 20+ letters out to our legislators in opposition. He doesn't know at this point if any action was taken on it.
- Received two resolutions from the Smithfield School Committee. They are looking for support on a contract continuation bill in legislature and also support on opposing binding arbitration. Will put them on the next agenda.

2. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**: Dr. Lusi reported on the following:

- Last week, there was an article in the Providence Journal regarding high school graduation requirements. Unfortunately, Portsmouth was listed as a district that still had work to do. We received a letter from the Commissioner in February and shortly thereafter requested a meeting with RIDE. It was somehow overlooked. We did meet with RIDE staff today and are putting an action plan in place. We have up until 2012 to meet the requirements. RIDE staff will work very closely with us, and we are confident we will meet those requirements. We are fully aligning our curriculum to GSEs and will have full implementation of ILPs.

- Mr. Erin Escher received the AMGEN award for science teaching excellence yesterday. Presented him with a check for \$5,000; and PMS gets \$5,000 for improving and enhancing science curriculum.
- a) Teaching and Learning: Assistant Superintendent Jermain reported on the following:
- The Strategic Plan is now posted on our website, and updates are also posted. One objective was to strengthen the parent/school connection. A survey will be sent to parents and staff soon.
  - We have developed a Portsmouth Parent Support Group at PHS, through grant money, a facilitator, Ray Davis, meets to discuss issues and topics that the group wants more information on. In March, they met with Assistant Principals and addressed concerns regarding policies on absenteeism, tardiness, etc. The Assistant Principals will meet again with the group and provide more information. Last week, Peter Letendre, a licensed local psychotherapist, spoke to the group on childhood depression and sub-stance abuse -- a topic the group requested; next week, they will meet with a representative from Verizon regarding putting parental controls on cell phones.
  - Our co-teaching work has been ongoing, and the group has been meeting on Friday afternoons. This group has created a self-reflection tool, an observer tool, so that the co-teaching process can be assessed as part of the Strategic Plan. This is to build consistency in expectations, improve our model, and increase student achievement.
  - The K-12 math group continues to assess and work on a timeline to develop a comprehensive curriculum. They are working with the University of Austin Dana Center monthly to align GLEs and GSEs and deepen the content. They sent a letter of intent to RIDE that Portsmouth would like to continue its work with the Dana Center. We are applying for another grant in the science area as well as doing curriculum and content building at EBEC.
  - The RI Electronic Portfolio system will no longer be supported by RIDE. As of June 1<sup>st</sup>, we are going to start to switch over to other forms of electronic storage for students.
  - From the state, Mrs. Jermain is still working on the student information commission and recommendations for the Commissioner and the legislature. This group has been meeting on Thursdays to make a recommendation to the Commissioner on student information systems. A report will be presented in early June.
  - Mrs. Jermain will be meeting with the Race to the Top Steering Committee on Thursday to plan for the Round 2 application.
  - The Sustainable School Group will be meeting in April to discuss further initiatives to make our schools green.
- b) Finance and Operations: No report.
- c) High School Liaison: Absent.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and was seconded by Mrs. Levesque to approve the minutes of the meeting held March 23, 2010. So voted 7-0.

Mrs. Perrotti made a motion to approve the addendum to the March 23, 2010, minutes. Seconded by Ms. Volpicelli. Mr. Carpender stated that he was not going to support it because the addendum is longer than his comments in the minutes. His remarks are available on the CD. The motion was denied 3-4. Mrs. Perrotti, Ms. Volpicelli, and Mrs. King voted in favor.

4. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a) **Appt. – Network Administrator.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee affirms the Superintendent's appointment, Recommendation #1-4/13/10, to the position of Network Administrator, effective May 3, 2010, or sooner."
- b) **Coaching Appts. – PHS.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee affirms the volunteer coaching appointments at Portsmouth High School for the 2009-10 school year as presented."
- c) **Request for Approval – Unpaid Leave of Absence.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee approves the request of Timothy Marum, Portsmouth High School Math Teacher, to take a 1-year unpaid leave of absence for the 2010-11 school year."
- d) **Approval of Requests for Permission to Home School.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee approves the requests to provide home schooling for the 2009-10 school year for students HS #24-4/10, as listed in the confidential memo dated April 1, 2010, in accordance with the provisions of R.I. Law 16-19-2."

A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and was seconded by Mrs. Levesque to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. So voted 7-0. Dr. Lusi announced the appointment of Mr. Steven Costa to the position of Network Administrator. She also announced the following volunteer coaches: Todd Peckham, Baseball; Tara McCarthy, Girls Lacrosse; Bill Waterman, Girls Lacrosse; Peter Kirwin, (EMT Girls Lacrosse); Myke Hurley, (EMT Boys Lacrosse); Dave Kingman, Boys Lacrosse; and Cynthia Wynegar, Girls Track.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

## 6. **BUSINESS AGENDA**

- a) **Discussion/Action – Closure of Elmhurst School.** Mr. Carpender stated that each member of the committee will have 10 minutes to ask questions to make comments; then the public will have 3 minutes each. At the close of that, he will ask for a motion for what action will be taken. He stated that the discussion tonight is based on the closure of Elmhurst School in regards to the budget and closing the gap, and there will be no discussion regarding the Facilities Plan. Mr. Buddemeyer stated that at the April 7, 2010, Finance Subcommittee meeting, the subcommittee voted 3-0 to recommend the closure of Elmhurst to the full School Committee as one measure to close the gap. He is recommending it because of the condition of the building itself, the pretty scary budget numbers coming up, and the fact that we are looking at deficits of over a million dollars. These are difficult decisions, but we need to make attempts to rectify our budget with state and federal reductions. The following committee members stated that they were in support of closing Elmhurst for a variety of reasons: Mrs. Levesque, Ms. Wedge, Mr. Buddemeyer, Mrs. King, Ms. Volpicelli, and Mr. Carpender. Mrs. Perrotti stated that she was opposed to closing Elmhurst.

Dr. Lusi reviewed the map of Portsmouth Middle School, showing the grade configurations. Grades 4 and 5 will be in individual houses, with a dedicated house leader/guidance position. There will be separate lunches, classrooms, and teacher teams. She clarified a misunderstanding about students being assigned to class in the science lab full time. Learning Center B3 has four extra classrooms, and the science labs are available for science classes. Dr. Lusi reviewed a slide about transportation and then about the model. She showed the map of Portsmouth from the RIPEC report, which was done in Fall 2009, that showed the residential locations of elementary school students. The majority of students is located more centrally or resides towards the northern portion of the island. She stated that we will try very hard to keep bus routes between 45-50 minutes, even though the state laws and regulations allow 1 hour bus rides. We will have monitors on every PMS and elementary bus. Dr. Lusi clarified that the School Department could not put Elmhurst up for sale because when we give up the school, the land reverts back to the Town; and the Town makes the decision about the future of that property. The School Department does not have the right to sell it. She stated that the contractual cap on class size remains in effect. Moving the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders to PMS will not increase class size. The contractual cap in Kindergarten is 21 students, 22 students in Grades 1 and 2; and 25 students in Grades 3 and above.

The following members of the public voiced their questions, concerns, or opposition to the closing of Elmhurst School: Christopher Bicho, Michael Van Buren, Colleen Crotteau, Larry Fitzmorris, Margie Brennan, Deborah Janik, Elizabeth Harris, Kathryn McNamara, Kathy Melvin, Tom Smith, Mike Daly, Elizabeth Dellenbaugh, Laura Ramroth, Stephanie Federico, John Matthews, Jeff Pitt, Christine Pierce, Linda Hobbs, Tim Banks, Ellen Toner, Ken Amen, Dave Rosenberg, Nancy Chrupcala.

John McDade supported the closing, and Andrew Kelly inquired about the fire code safety issue at Elmhurst.

Public comment ended at 9:11 PM.

Mr. Carpender stated that he'd like to have a team put together to address the aforementioned concerns over the next six months so that parents are involved going forward. Mr. Buddemeyer made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Finance Subcommittee and close Elmhurst. Seconded by Mrs. Levesque. Mrs. Perrotti made a motion to table the decision until the actual transportation costs are known and the department can do a review of when the Pre-K to Grade 4 population could fit into Melville and Hathaway. Seconded by Ms. Volpicelli. Mrs. Perrotti's motion failed 3-4. Mrs. Perrotti, Mrs. King, and Ms. Volpicelli voted in favor. The original motion passed 4-3. Mrs. Perrotti, Mrs. King, and Ms. Volpicelli were opposed.

- b) **Judicial Fairness Resolution.** Dr. Lusi stated that last year, as part of the Committee's discussion on the legislative agenda, a few members of the Rhode Island Interlocal Trust came to the School Committee meeting and gave a presentation on TORT Reform. It failed in the legislature, so the Trust is attempting it again. They are trying to limit damages that can be sought when municipalities and school departments are subject to litigation. Ms. Wedge made a motion to accept the judicial fairness resolution as presented. Seconded by Mrs. Levesque. So voted 6-0-1. Mrs. Perrotti abstained.
- c) **Approval of February Financials.** A motion was made by Ms. Wedge to approve the February financials as previously distributed. Seconded by Mrs. Levesque. So voted 7-0.
- d) **Agenda Item Requests Denied by Chair.** Mr. Carpender stated that he denied the below requests for various reasons; however, Mrs. Perrotti has a right to have them heard. The items will not be debated.
  - 1) **Duties of School Committee Chair:** Mrs. Perrotti made a motion to have the duties of the school committee chair discussed. Seconded by Mrs. King. Mrs. Perrotti stated that Chairman Carpender accused her of casting doubt on the whole Facilities Report during his "Chairman's Report" in the March 23, 2010, school committee meeting and would not allow her to comment. Mr. Carpender stated that he denied this request in an email to Mrs. Perrotti because it is the Chairman's right to make corrective comments as part of a report and not put it on the agenda for discussion. His purpose for making the comments was to correct insinuations. The motion failed 3-4. Mrs. Perrotti, Mrs. King, and Ms. Volpicelli voted in favor.
  - 2) **Table of Organization:** Mrs. Perrotti removed this request from the agenda.

- 3) Facilities Plan: Mrs. Perrotti made a motion to add the review of the Facilities Plan to the agenda, in light of the potential closing of Elmhurst School. Mr. Carpender denied Mrs. Perrotti's request because tonight's discussion is about closing Elmhurst as part of the budget process in an attempt to close some of the gap. The Facilities Plan was approved at a prior meeting and can only be brought up by a member who had voted on the prevailing side. No one from the prevailing side made a motion to discuss it. Mr. Carpender stated that the Facilities Plan is a long-term project, and the Committee is addressing immediate needs tonight.

7. **SUBCOMMITTEE AGENDA**

- a) **Facilities.** Mr. Buddemeyer stated that he is in the process of getting the Facilities Plan on the April 26<sup>th</sup> Town Council agenda.
- b) **Finance.** No further report.
- c) **Health and Wellness.** Ms. Volpicelli stated that the next meeting will be held in May.
- d) **Policy.** No report.

A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and seconded by Mrs. Levesque to adjourn the meeting. So voted 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 9:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patti Cofield  
Recording Secretary for:

Mrs. Marjorie Levesque, Clerk